

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the

Q U E E N,

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W H I T E - H A L L ,

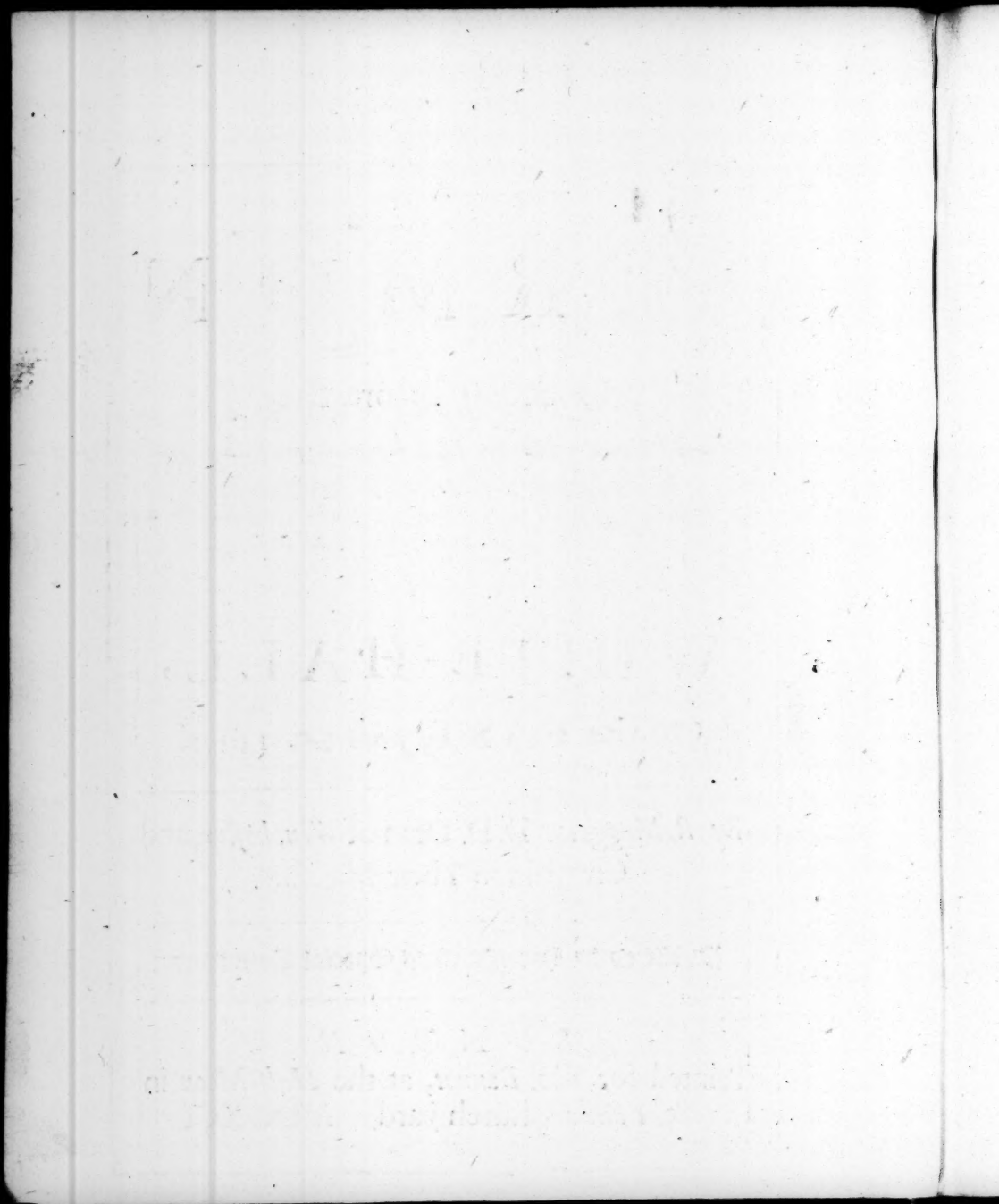
On the F A S T , *July* 15. 1691.

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Chaplain to Their Majesties.

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L O N D O N ,

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2 S A M. XXIV. 14.

And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait : let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, (for his mercies are great) and let me not fall into the hand of man.

THat none who pretend love to their native Country, either upon *dissatisfaction* about the manner of the *publick settlement*, or *discontent* upon account of any *personal disappointment*, may be so far prejudiced, as to be cold or careless in their devotions this day, set apart for the imploring a blessing upon their *Majesties and their forces*, against the threatening ambition of the *common enemy of Europe*. : That none (I say)

may be leavened and sowed to that degree, as, if not to *desire*, yet, not dread or regard our *ill success*, I have chose to represent to you, the horrid and important consequences of it.

Howsoever it may look at a distance to some men in *their* passions, it is certainly one of the greatest *judgments* that can befall a *nation*, to be *subdued* by, and *brought* under the *power* of their professed inveterate *enemies*.

VI 12. This appeareth here to have been the *opinion* of *wise* and *pious David*, who, when he was commanded by God to make his choice of those three *evils*, the *famine*, the *pestilence*, or *flying before his enemies*, deprecate the *last*, as incomparably the *greatest* of them all.

2 King. 8.
25. The *famine* was to have been a *long* one; to have held for *seven years*, in which time what miserable straits must they necessarily have been reduced to ! In a *famine* an *asses head* hath been sold for *fourscore pieces of Silver*, and a *fourth part of a cab of dung*, for *five pieces of Silver* : In a *famine* there is no help out of the *barn-floor*, or out of the *wine-press*,

6. 27.

press, but the hands of the pittiful women have Lam. 4. 10.
sodden their own children, and made them their
meat : and tho in one of so unusual a con-
 tinuance, he could not but expect the most
 woful extremities, yet he looketh upon *fly-*
ing before his enemies as more dismal than
that.

The *Pestilence* was to have lasted but
three days, but when we consider what a
depopulation might have been made even in
 that *short time*, we must conclude, the
 thoughts of it could not but be very terrible
 to him. When the *destroying Angel of the* 2 Kings 19.
Lord went out against the camp of the Assyri- 30.
ans in one night he smote of them an hundred
fourscore and five thousand ; and at that pro-
 portion how great must be the number that
 might have been *smitten in three whole days !*
 and yet this he chooseth also, rather than
flyng before his enemies : tho either of the
 other must have been very sore calamities,
 yet this he reckoned would be a *sorer*. So
 he manifesteth by the answer he returneth in
 the Text, *David said unto Gad I am in a*
great strait, let us fall now into the hand
of the Lord (for his mercies are great) but
let

let me not fall into the hand of man.

That the whole Story of this, as well as what I would infer from it, may appear the clearer, I shall open these three things to you.

First, wherein the greatness of *David's* sin in *numbring the People*, (which was the cause of this judgment) consisted?

Secondly, Why God punished the People for it (for unto them all three of the Plagues propounded did extend, which soever he had chose of them) when the sin was only *David's*?

Thirdly, Why *David* so particularly prayeth against *flying before his Enemies*, as so much more dreadful than either of the other two?

The first thing I would open is wherein the greatness of *David's* sin in *numbring the People* (which was the cause of this judgment lay? The thing at first sight doth not look like so heinous a crime, as to deserve so severe a punishment. It had been done before often, and we do not read any fault was found with it, any displeasure from God arose upon it. *Moses numbred the People*,
Numb.

Numb. 1. 19. Saul *numbred the people*, 1 Sam. 11. 8. *David himself numbred the People* before, 2 Sam. 15. 1. and none of them are blamed for it, no evil ensued upon it. How cometh it now then to be taken so very ill?

Some *men* indeed are so uncertain and humourous, that what they are well enough pleased with at one time, they will be much offended with at another. But this is not to be supposed in God: No, *This numbring of the People* was of a different sort from any of them I but now mentioned. *Moses's* numbring the people was upon a *civil* account, by the expresse command of God, to preserve their Pedegrees after their Families. *Sauls* numbring the People was upon a *military* account, when he was to march against the *Ammonites*, that he might know what strength he had. *David's* numbring the people *before* was upon the *same* account when they were going to battle to rank them under their severall Officers. But this was for none of these ends, no justifiable reason to be given of it. Upon this account *Joab* modestly endeavoured to put him off from

it, v. 3 of this Chapter, *He said unto the King, Now the Lord thy God add unto the People an hundred fold how many soever they be, but why doth my Lord the King delight in this thing?* Humbly intimating that he had better forbear it, that it was needless and improper.

Exodus 30. 12, 13. God sayeth to Moses, *when thou takest the sum of the Children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his Soul to the Lord, when thou numbrest them: that there be no Plague among them, when thou numbrest them. This they shall give every one that passeth among them that are numbred half a Shekel after the Shekel of the Sanctuary.* He enjoyneth this so, as that it should be a forfeiture of their Lives, if they omitted it. And the Jewish Doctors generally reckon this to be *Dauids* sin, that when he numbred them, he did not cause them to pay this mony. But other Interpreters with greater probability, lay it upon another thing. Namely, his *Pride* and *Vain-Glory*, that when there was no real occasion that did require it, he would have them numbred meerly in a vaunting way, that it might be spread about both in his own, and other

other Kingdoms, how vast their *number* was. So that if now he had made them pay this offering, it had been so far from making it no sin in him, that (*I apprehend*) it would but have aggravated, and made it greater. For then to his *Pride*, he had added *Oppression*, by needless taxing and peeling of his Subjects.

That he was conscious to himself of no good end he had in it, appeareth by the 10th v. of this Chapter, wherein we find that before *Gad* came to him, *his heart smote him and he said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done.* So great a sin was it, not only in God's Eye but also in his own, *to trust in man and make Flesh his arm.* And may all that fear his name of what Rank and Condition soever they are, as they expect his blessing, in every circumstance have a care of it !

It is a dangerous mistake to fancy, that none but *sensual* Extravagancies, such as *Intemperance* and *Uncleanness*, &c. are displeasing to the Almighty. *Odious* as these are, we may learn from this story, he is as highly provoked by *spiritual* sins, such as we generally

have favourable opinion of, the having our *hearts lifted up* with creature enjoyments, and *departing from the Lord our God.*

Ezek. 18.
20. But still it being *David* only that was guilty, it remaineth to be enquired into, why God punisheth the *People* for it? How could they help it? It was none of their Doings. Doth not God himself set down this for his rule, *The Soul that sinneth it shall dye. The Son shall not bear the iniquity of the Father, neither shall the Father bear the iniquity of the Son?* How come then the *Subjects* here to bear the iniquity of their *King*? *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?*

Deut. 1. 37 Yes, there is nothing here that maketh to the contrary. It might be sufficient to alledge the near *relation* between *Prince* and *People*, and their welfare so mutually depending on each other, that the Punishment of the one is t'others; and as he sometimes *punisheth* the *People* in their *Prince*; *The Lord was angry with Moses for their sakes*: So he sometimes punisheth the *Prince* in his *People*; the head is out of order, and the other *Members* are *blistered*, or *let blood* for it.

But

But we need not have recourse to that in this case, here was sin of their own to be accounted for. I confess, I am not satisfied with that answer some have given to it, *viz.* that the People deserved it for their sin in not *opposing* David in this thing, and *suffering themselves* to be *numbred*. For tho (as hath been already said) *David* had no good reason for his doing it, yet he might have had, which he was not obliged to communicate to them : and it is a principle of too dangerous a latitude for the Government and Peace of Mankind, to affirm, that Subjects are not to submit to the commands and orders of their respective Sovereigns, except they themselves are satisfied in the grounds of them. Tho (I say) I do not take this to be their sin ; yet they had sins, such as did justly merit this Punishment at the hands of God. Tho they are not expressed in *particular*, yet they are sufficiently implied in the *general*, *v. 1* of this Chapter, where it is said that *the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them, to say, go number Israel.* So that this act of his seemeth not so much the *cause* of their
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Punishment as the occasion. God had a controversy with them, for which they deserved as much as this, had *David* never done the thing : But upon his doing it, he inflicteth it, in the same act punishing him too. The wise man telleth us, Prov. 14. 28. *in the multitude of people is the Kings honour, but in the want of people is the destruction of the Prince.* So that this was really a judgment upon him as well as them, and, if we consider it, a home one, such as he might evidently read his *sin* in. His sin was *Vanity* and *carnal Security*, in *relying* and *glorying* in the *numbers* of his people : his punishment is, the lessning and diminishing the *numbers* of those people he was so proud of.

And let this suffice for the second Quæry, of which, with the former, having said thus much, I now proceed to the chief one : Why *David* doth here so particularly deprecate *falling into the hand of man* ?

As to the other two, some think he was indifferent, leaving it wholly to Gods disposal, without pitching upon either : only praying against the third.

But

But the Septuagint is of another mind, adding to the Text these words, *ὃ ἐξελέξατο ἑαυτῷ Δαυὶδ τὸν θάνατον* and *David chose the plague*. v. 5.

And that which immediately followeth in the next verse seemeth much to countenance it, where it is said, *so God sent the Pestilence*. As if he had done it upon his Election and determination. *Josephus* in his history not only affirmeth this particular of *David*, but addeth this plausible reason of it, that he did it upon prudent and politick considerations; to avoid the murmurings and discontent of the People, who (it was easy to foresee) were like to resent it sufficiently, to undergo any of those miseries, purely upon his score. To prevent this therefore as much as might be, he *supposeth* that he chose this, as that wherein he showed the least respect of all to his own security.

Had he chose the *Famine*, that indeed would have been very heavy upon the *poor*, they would have much to do to *live* when *provisions* should be so excessive *scarce* and *dear*, that can so *hardly* shift for themselves when they are at the *cheapest*. Yea, in so *many* years, it must have pinched even the *rich*, and they

they who used to *fare deliciously* could not but be put to it, to supply themselves with necessaries. But it cannot be imagined, that the *King* himself could have suffered in his own person by it. If there were any food to be had in the *Kingdom*, be sure there would be no *want* at his *table*; and if there were none, he could be furnished from *other Countries*.

If he had been worsted by his *enemies*, tho his own *courage* and *gallantry* might be for carrying him into the greatest *dangers*, yet the *people* would have thought themselves too much concerned for *the light of Israel*, not to interpose themselves to *succour* and *secure* him: or they who before were so tender of him, that their *care* made them almost forget their *duty*, swear unto him he ^{2 Sam. 21.} should go no more out with them unto battel, ^{7.} would have perswaded him to retire to some of his *strong-holds*, that might be tenable for *three months* at least against any army.

But in the *pestilence*, he who had the command of the Exchequer, would be in equal danger with him that had no money; he who sat upon the Throne, as obnoxious

as

as he that grindeth at the Mill. The Pestilence could not be kept off by the most stout and resolute Guards, nor could it be kept out by the most impregnable Walls and Bulwarks.

This David could not but know when he chose it, but he doth it not upon so mean a principle as that Historian fancyeth, only to decline the clamour and censure of his People. No, this publick spirited Prince had a nobler and more heroick Soul. He was really content not only to suffer with them, but for them; to have a share in the Punishment, but to bear it all. He said unto God, *Let thy hand I pray thee be on me and my Fathers house but not on thy People that they should be plagued.* ^{v. 17.} No, it was not so much from design to pacifie them, or fear of losing their good opinion, as from a just perswasion, that all things considered, this was the least of those three evils propounded to him; or however that flying before his enemies was the greatest, and therefore he expressly declineth that, *let me not fall into the hand of man.*

It would not be passed by here, that he doth not speak simply of having war with
C men.

men. It appeareth by his own frequent practices, he did not look on that as so *dreadful* a thing as either *Plague* or *Famine*. Not only *fierce* and *ambitious*, but *just* and *good Princes*, have chosen *that*, rather than suffer things much less terrible, without *reparation* and *satisfaction*. For tho *such* have been universally ashamed to involve those that were under them in such calamities as *this* necessarily bringeth along with it, for *slight* and *frivolous* causes ; such as their own *Vanity* or *Glory*, *Humour* or *Covetousness*, *Pride* or *personal Piques* ; yet *breaking their Leagues*, *injuring their Subjects*, *invading their rights*, *oppressing their Allies*, and such like, have always been judged not only *sufficient* but *necessary* grounds for it, notwithstanding all the *expences*, *miseries*, *dangers* and *bloodshed* that attend it. It was not simply *war*, but *mis-carrying* in the *war* that he so dreaded, the being *conquered* and *overcome*, which he here expresth by *falling into their hand*, let me not fall into the hand of man.

This he apprehendeth the *saddest* of any of the *judgments*, propounded to him. And there are Four things, that in *his case* might well induce him to think so. First,

First, They were Men.

Secondly, They were Enemies.

Thirdly, They were Foreigners.

Fourthly, They were Idolaters, haters and persecutors of the true religion which was professed by him and his people.

First, They were Men. When God lifteth up his hand *who can contend?* when he is angry, who can stand before him? Here to yield is our duty; to submit and humble our selves our glory. When smitten by him men are pitted: When afflicted by him, they are lamented. It doth not reflect upon their discretion when their Harvests are destroyed by unseasonable weather, nor upon their valour and bravery to be visited, and carried off by a malignant Fever. These are purely from above; enemies no more contribute to it, than friends can remedy it; neither have more influence one way or other, than they have upon an Eclipse of the Sun, or an Earthquake. But this was quite another case. Here the blow was to come from his fellow creatures; those with whom he was at least equal in all things, and upon the level. So that if these prevailed against him, the disgrace would be

as great as the *defeat*, and the loss of his *Esteem* of as bad consequence as of a *battel*. How must the *news* of it lessen his *reputation* every where round about him! When it should be told in *Gath*, and published in the streets of *Askalon*, how would the daughters of the *Philistines* rejoyce, the Daughters of the *uncircumcised* triumph, to hear that *Israel* fled! *Israel* that had been so renowned for a *valiant* and *warlike* nation, whose ancestors had subdued those people, and been a continual terror to them! The time would fail me to tell of *Gideon*, and of *Barak*, of *Sampson* also, and of *Jephthah*, who waxed *valiant* in fight, and turned to flight the armies of these *aliens*: of the bow of *Jonathan* that turned not back, and the *Sword* of *Saul* that returneth not empty from the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty.

Heb. 11.32.

2 Sam. 1.22.

'Tis granted that *time* and *chance* so happen to all, that the *battel* is not always to the strong; by *surprize* and *stratagems* on one hand, by *carelesness* or *treachery* on the other; by odd *accidents* and *contingencies* on both; it may so fall out that the *likelier* host may be *discomfited*, and not suffer much in their credit

dit neither : But to have it so constantly for *three months* together, they needs must fall into an absolute *contempt* amongst their *adversaries*. How must this flush and puff up an insolent and vain-glorious people, to find themselves so *long* and *uninterruptedly successful* ? This were enough to possess them with a belief that if ever they had been *stout*, they were now utterly *degenerated*; and would never *stand* more, who were so *constantly routed* : and that is one thing that might make him so averse to this above all, the *disgrace* and *shame* of it : they were *men* : such men as he and his people had hitherto been reckoned an *over match* for. But this was the least thing.

Secondly, They were *Enemies*. Such as would rejoyce in an *opportunity* to reack their *malice* on them, and be sure to do all the *mischief* they were *able* to them. It is the character given of the Almighty that *he doth* Lam. 3. 33.
not afflict willingly nor grieve the Children of
men, that he will not always chide, neither keep Psal. 103. 9.
his anger for ever. But that when he is *offend-*
ed he is *easy to be entreated*. So he describeth himself in the *Prophet*. At *what time* I *shall*
speak

Jer. 18. 7, 8. *Speak concerning a Nation and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down, and to destroy it, if that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. Upon their Fasting and Humiliation, upon their acknowledgment and amendment he will receive them graciously and revoke his sentence. But this is not after the manner of men, offended men toward them they bear a grudge to, when they have them in their Power. To humble our selves before them is but to be despised by them; to mourn, but to be derided by them; to pray and beseech them, but the way to be the more reproached and upbraided by them.*

v. 22, 23. *In the story of Susanna, she is represented as making a choice seemingly contrary to this ; she sighed and said to her enemies, I am straitened on every side, for if I do this thing it is death unto me, and if I do it not I cannot escape your hands, it is better for me to fall into your hands, &c. But hers was a quite different case, then the choice was between offending God on one hand, and displeasing Men on the other. Then it is not in the least to be doubt-*

doubted, but that it is a more fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, than to fall into the hands of the most merciless and cruel men; these can but kill the body, and when they have done that, have not more that they can do, but he can cast both soul and body into Hell. Accordingly when the question is between *sin* and *danger*, we should rather run the hazard of the most probable apparent danger, than endeavour to avoid it by direct and known *sin*. But if we speak of meer temporal Punishment, it is better to fall into the hand of God: for when he is angry, upon our sincere and penitent application to him, he may, he hath promised he will be prevailed with to remit and forgive, to relax and mitigate his sentence. So according to the Sept. he did here: what we have translated *the time appointed*, v. 15. they read *ἡσ ὥρας ἀπὸ τοῦ ἑσπέρου*, so the Lord sent a Pestilence upon Israel from the morning to the hour of noon; understanding by the time appointed, not the time appointed by God for the lasting of the pestilence, but for the consuming the daily sacrifice: and so the Chaldee paraphrast, *a tempore quo mandatur jure, quousque adoleatur*: by this Interpretation.

terpretation, tho he threatned it for *three days*, yet he recalled it in *six hours*. But to be *given up to the will of men*, is a different thing ; from *them*, this is not to be hoped for ; tho upon our *turning to him*, he mercifully maketh his *judgments*, not only less than his *word*, but less than our *fears*: this is not to be expected from the *hand of men* ; they are deaf as the Adder that stoppeth her ears, and will not hearken to the voice of the charmer. And that is another consideration, upon which *David* chooseth to *fall into the hand of God*, a punishment *immediately* from him, because he might be prevailed with to relent : for *his mercies are great*, but prayeth against falling into *the hand of man*, being delivered up to their power, because there was nothing to be looked for but the *extremity*, they would not bate a minute of the time *permitted* for their *vexing* them.

Thirdly, They were *Foreigners*. *The Tabernacles of Edom and the Ishmalites, Moab and the Hagarens, Gebal and Ammon, Amalek and Assur, &c.* Tho all *enemies* are very terrible, yet there are *degrees* amongst *these*, they of the *same Country* (tho *enemies*) being *neigh-*
bours

bours and *brethren* think themselves to have some sort of *eye* on them towards one another, insomuch that when they are so unhappy as to be engaged in *war* among themselves, whoever is *Victor* looketh on himself as under an obligation to be *tender*. But what can they reasonably hope for, that fall into the hands of *Strangers*?

Many and greivous are the *calamities* that attend a *civil war*, the *frights*, the *outrages*, the *wastes*, the *violences* have been too lately felt in *this Nation*, to need yet to be described to you: They who have not seen them with their eyes, have heard them with their ears, and our Fathers have (with reason enough) declared to us, the miserable doings that were then. But sad as this was, it is yet much sadder to bear the fury of *Foreigners*, *their little finger is heavier than the loins of natives*, whereas these *chastise with whips*, they *chastise with Scorpions*.

When God threatneth his People with the severest sort of *Foes*, he addeth this as the most aggravating circumstance, Jer. 5. 15. *I will bring a nation upon you from far O house of Israel, &c. a nation whose language thou knowest not,*

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neither

neither understandest what they say. What a condition must they be in, that are at the mercy of such as these ! what have these to check or lay restraints on them ! All arguments of compassion soften them no more, than weeping doth the Wolf, or entreating worketh on Tygers. Who can express the spoils and insolencies, the cruelty and barbarities, the rapes and villanies, the burnings and bloodbeds that are the delight as well as busi-

Isa. 13. 15, 16. *ness of such Invaders ! Every one that is found shall be thrust through, and every one that is joyned unto them shall fall by the Sword, their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes, their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished, their bows also shall dash the young men in peices, and they shall have no pity*

Psal. 79. 2. *on the fruit of the womb, their dead bodies shall they give to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and their flesh unto the beasts of the earth: it shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.* So the Spirit at sundry times describerh the dealings of *such men* with those that fall into their hands. What a fearful agony doth it put the man of God in when he saw it but in *imperfect Vision*, Jer. 4. 19, 20.

My

My bowels, my bowels, I am pained at my very heart, my heart maketh a noise in me, I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my Soul, the sound of the Trumpet, and the alarm of war : destruction upon destruction is cryed, for the whole land is spoiled, suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. And when these are the fruits of it who can wonder, if David here pray so particularly, let me not fall into the hand of man? And yet you have not heard the worst of it. For

Fourthly, There is to be added to all this, that they were Idolaters, Haters and Persecutors of the true religion which was professed by him and his people. Such were the borderers upon Israel all of them ; and if these should get the better of them, they would certainly bring their Gods along with them. And could there any thing befall them like that! The Law of thy mouth (saith David) is better unto me than thousands of Gold and Silver, but if these prevailed they must look to be deprived not only of their Gold and Silver, but that too. And how sad a consideration must it be to a Prince so sincerely pious as he, to think that his people might by this means lose not only

their *estates* and *fortunes*, but the *profession* and *worship* of the *true God* too ! They to whom were committed the *Oracles of God*, perish for *lack of vision* ! they to whom pertained the *adoption* and *glory*, be without a *Priest* and without an *Ephod* ! the *abomination of desolation* stand in the *holy place*, and the *ark* be removed to make way for *Dagon* ! When he thought of these things how could he but pour out his *Soul* in him ?

And yet this is the common effect of their *Victories* with them that hold of *superstitious Vanities* they are as eager to rout the *faith* as the *Forces* of them who are more *enlightned*, and as zealous to spread their *errors* as their *dominions*. Hear how the *Psalmist* describeth such peoples behaviour upon their successes, *Psal. 74. Thine enemies roar in the midst of the congregation they set up their banners for tokens, they defile the dwelling place of thy name, and break down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers, they cast fire into thy Sanctuary, and burn up all the Synagogues of God in the land.*

If they would stop here it were not altogether so intolerable, tho they could not
serve

serve God publickly, it were some comfort, if they might be permitted to do it *privately*; but as if it were not enough to hinder them from the exercise of the *true religion*, they are not content, except they can compel them to be *profelytes* to their *false* one; making use of the most *horrid, barbarous* and *inhumane* ways to compass it. *Hebr. 11. 36, 37.* we read the usage that from time to time hath been the portion of such as would not *apostatize* and *comply*, they had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, moreover of bonds and imprisonments, they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword, they wandred about in Sheeps-skins and Goats-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.

As if it were a small thing to be masters of their *Bodies*, men of this sort set up to be Masters of their *Souls* too; and that they may wear out the *Saints of the most high*, are restless while they have *changed their Times and Laws*. And when we reflect upon this, that thus the vanquished are generally treated by *such enemies*, we cannot but be convinced that *David's choice* was a *wise one*, and he had great reason to pray, that he might
fall

fall into the hand of the Lord, and that he might not fall into the hand of such men. To conclude then.

These things I have in a figure transferred to *David* and his Enemies for your sakes, that you may learn not to think of the *Enemy* you are now contending with, otherwise than you ought to think, but to think properly. It is but too plain that *some mens* behaviour maketh it not unneedful; *men* who are not able to conceal their *satisfaction*, when they hear any thing of his *power*, or joy when they hear of his *advantages*. There are a sort of *English-men*, whom (I confess) I do not much wonder at, (those who are blind to all considerations besides, where they apprehend *R O M E* to be any ways concerned or interested) but that any of *our own Communion* should be not only so *unnatural*, but *self-contradicting*, I needs must say, is not a little surprizing. Admit all their objections, what can such in all their uneasy frowardness promise themselves, as to the bettering of things from *him*. Could I suppose any such to be here, I would expostulate with them in the

Prophet

Prophet Amos's language, Ch. 5. 18, 19. *Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord ! to what end is it for you ? The day of the Lord is darkness and not light. As if a man did flee from a Lyon and a Bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a Serpent bit him.* After what hath been already said, it would be next to nauseous to go about to make a *parallel* : Your own thoughts must before this have suggested to you, that there was nothing in the *men David* so much dreaded falling into the hands of, more than *Plague* or *Famine*, that, without any straining, is not to be found in *these*.

But yet there are among us who endeavour to perswade themselves and others, that notwithstanding we need not be apprehensive in our case, because this *Monarch* hath no *design* at all on *us*, all he aimeth at is only to *assist* and *restore* a distressed *Prince* that hath *fled* for *succour* to him. Such a kind of conceit was once got into the heads of a considerable party among the *Himerians*, concerning *Phalaris*, whom they applied to in their *discontents* for *help* and *aid*, giving him all such furtherances as they could,

Arist. Rhet.
l. 2. c. 21.

could, And notwithstanding his *tyrannick* and *ambitious* humour was so well known, would not *believe* that he aimed at any thing in all his *chargeable preparations* but only to *gratifie* and *serve* them. *Stesichorus* (their Countryman) making an Oration to them upon this occasion, relateth an *Apologue*, which for its appositeness I shall crave leave to repeat, and leave it to them who take pleasure in abusing themselves with a sham of like sort, to consider of it. The Apologue was of a *Horse*, who being troubled that the *Stag* was got into his pasture, desired a *Man* that he would help him to drive him out : He seemed ready and willing ; but told him, it would be necessary that he should Bridle and Saddle, and get up upon his back, or else he should not be able to compass it : The *Horse* accepteth the *condition*, and *suffereth* him to do so ; but when he was once up, instead of being revenged of the *Stag*, the poor creature found his mistake, that he was only subject to the *Rider* past recovery. How like *the horse and the mule that have no understanding*, are they that can be so *credulous*, as to imagine such
And

a pretence in *our great enemy*, to be any thing more real than the other was, which he imposed upon the *Beast* with ?

Who would pity them that should put themselves *into the hands of such men* ? who would pity them that would not do their utmost to keep out of them ? It is granted it must be very *expensive*, and a *charge* we have not been used to : but is not that rather to be chosen than *to fall into the hands of men* ? Such *men*, as would not be satisfied with much larger proportions of what we have, but be insatiable as *the daughter of the Horse-leech* ? It is granted it must cost the *blood* and *lives* of many ; but is not that rather to be chosen, than *to fall into the hands of men* ? Such *men*, who if they spared them, would make all so *weary of their lives*, they would not value them ?

This excellent *King* in the text, this tender *Father* of his *country*, is content to suffer any thing from the *hand of God*, rather than be but *three Months* in the *hands of such men*. But that which now threatneth us, is a much *sadder* thing ; not for *three months*, but both *this* and *after ages* their being *Masters of us*.

And when this is before us, what *earthly calamity* as far as lyeth in us to determine, should we not *choose* rather? Tho God doth not offer us our *choice*, as he did *David* here, by *special revelation*, yet in some kind he doth by giving us *reason* to *guide* us in *difficulties*, and putting it into our *power* to *pitch* upon that which looketh least perilous.

It is time that I had done; but not to dismiss you without some comfort, I have yet to tell you, that he dealeth with *us* more *graciously*, than he did here with *David*, he must unavoidably have suffered *one* of those *judgments* that were propounded to him, But (tho we have *sins* much greater to answer for) he puteth *us* into a method (if we will hearken to it) how we may escape them all. Neither fall into the *hand of man*, nor yet into the *hand of God*. Assuring us that if *we will break off our sins* (every one our sins with which we are conscious to our selves we have provoked him) by *righteousness*, and *our iniquities* by *shewing mercy to the poor*, it shall be a *procuring our tranquility*. He hath been pleased to give an *earnest* of it already, even in our *wilderness*,

ness, speaking comfortably, and opening a door of hope in the valley of Achor.

Come then, and let us return unto the Lord, for *Hol. 6. 1, 2,* he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight, then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord, his going forth is prepared as the morning, and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the later and former rain upon the earth. For which let us not only on *this*, but every day humbly and devoutly make our prayers to him.

F I N I S.
